

THE FUTILITY OF AVOIDING METAPHYSICS: AN EXPOSÉ

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**AN ORIGINAL ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project work titled; **THE FUTILITY OF AVOIDING METAPHYSICS: AN EXPOSÉ** was carried out by **ADAMS BLESSING** with matriculation number **ART2101060** of the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin- City.

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DEDICATION

This project work is dedicated to God Almighty for the strength, provision, wisdom and guidance through out my stay in the University.

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ABSTRACT

Metaphysics, as the foundational inquiry into the ultimate nature of reality, has long been subject to both reverence and rejection in the history of philosophy. Various intellectual movements, ranging from empiricism to logical positivism, have attempted to discredit or bypass metaphysical speculation, deeming it unscientific, meaningless, or impractical. However, such efforts often fail to escape the very metaphysical presuppositions they seek to deny. This project exposes the futility of avoiding metaphysics by demonstrating that even the critique or dismissal of metaphysics itself rests on underlying metaphysical assumptions about knowledge, existence, and meaning. This project argues that metaphysics is inescapable because it constitutes the background framework through which human beings interpret reality, structure knowledge, and define values. Attempts to avoid it inevitably smuggle in hidden metaphysical commitments, whether in science, ethics, or epistemology. Thus, metaphysics cannot be meaningfully abandoned without undermining the very intellectual enterprise that seeks to replace it. By critically engaging with key anti-metaphysical traditions and contrasting them with contemporary defenses of metaphysical inquiry, this study reveals that metaphysics is not a dispensable exercise but a necessary foundation for coherent thought. Ultimately, the project exposes the paradox of avoiding metaphysics: in denying its relevance, one is already engaged in it. The expose affirms that the human quest for understanding cannot do without metaphysical reflection, making its avoidance not only futile but also self-defeating.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Metaphysics, as a branch of philosophy, concerns itself with the fundamental nature of reality, existence, and the underlying principles that govern being. Despite numerous attempts by philosophers, scientists, and skeptics to avoid or dismiss metaphysical inquiry, it continues to resurface as an inescapable aspect of human thought. The positivist tradition, particularly through the works of early 20th-century logical positivists such as A.J. Ayer, sought to eliminate metaphysical speculation, arguing that only empirical statements verifiable through sensory experience held meaningful content. However, this effort was ultimately self-defeating, as the very claim that metaphysical statements are meaningless is itself a metaphysical assertion. This paradox highlights the futility of attempting to avoid metaphysical discourse.¹

Immanuel Kant demonstrated that metaphysics is foundational to human cognition, as all knowledge is structured by categories of understanding that precede experience. Even in the realm of science, which often prides itself on empirical objectivity, metaphysical

¹ Ayer, A. J. (1936), *Language, Truth, and Logic*. (New York: Victor Gollancz), p. 43.

assumptions underlie fundamental concepts such as causality, space, and time². Scientists and philosophers alike must rely on metaphysical principles to justify their methods and assumptions, demonstrating that even the staunchest empiricists and materialists cannot fully escape metaphysical speculation. Karl Popper further reinforces this point by showing that scientific theories, while empirically tested, are built upon non-empirical conjectures and presuppositions.³

Martin Heidegger argues that metaphysics is not simply an abstract or dispensable field but is deeply embedded in human existence. His concept of *Dasein*—the being for whom being is a question—illustrates that human thought is always already engaged in a metaphysical process of self-interpretation.⁴ Similarly, Jacques Derrida critiques the idea of escaping metaphysics, suggesting that all discourse, including efforts to deconstruct metaphysics, inevitably operates within a metaphysical framework. This supports the argument that avoiding metaphysics is not only impractical but philosophically incoherent.⁵

The persistence of metaphysical questions across various intellectual disciplines underscores its unavoidable nature. Even contemporary debates in physics, such as the

² Derrida, J. (1997), *Of Grammatology* (G. C. Spivak, Trans.). (New York: Johns Hopkins University Press), p. 11.

³ Popper, K. (1959), *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, (London: Routledge), p. 11.

⁴ Heidegger, M. (1962), *Being and Time* (J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Trans.). New York: Harper & Row), p. 67.

⁵ Derrida, J. *Op. Cit.*, p. 25.

interpretations of quantum mechanics and the nature of consciousness, reveal metaphysical presuppositions.⁶ This study, therefore, aims to expose the futility of avoiding metaphysics by demonstrating its inextricable presence in philosophy, science, and human thought. By critically examining attempts to reject metaphysical inquiry and the paradoxes they create, this research seeks to reaffirm the indispensable role of metaphysics in intellectual discourse.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The debate surrounding metaphysics has been a recurring theme in philosophical discourse, particularly concerning whether it is possible or even desirable to avoid metaphysical speculation. Various intellectual traditions, such as logical positivism and scientific materialism, have attempted to dismiss metaphysical inquiry as meaningless or unnecessary. However, such attempts often encounter a paradox: the rejection of metaphysics itself relies on implicit metaphysical assumptions. This contradiction raises a critical philosophical problem—whether it is truly possible to engage in any form of rational inquiry without presupposing some metaphysical framework.

A major challenge arises from the fact that even scientific discourse, which prides itself on empirical verification, is built upon metaphysical foundations. Concepts such as causality, objectivity, and the nature of reality are not empirically derived but are assumed

⁶ D. Chalmers, (1996), *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 13-15.

a priori. If these foundational assumptions are unavoidable, then the effort to eliminate metaphysics appears not only futile but misguided. This issue necessitates a deeper investigation into the extent to which metaphysics is embedded in human cognition and knowledge production. The rejection of metaphysics has had significant implications in contemporary thought, influencing disciplines beyond philosophy, including the sciences, social sciences, and even political ideologies. The question, therefore, is not merely theoretical but has practical consequences for how knowledge is structured and justified. If the avoidance of metaphysics is an unattainable goal, then it becomes imperative to critically assess its role rather than dismiss it outright. This study, therefore, seeks to analyze the futility of avoiding metaphysics, examining the philosophical, scientific, and intellectual consequences of denying its necessity.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

- i. The purpose of this study is to critically examine the futility of avoiding metaphysics and to highlight its inescapable role in human thought and intellectual discourse.
- ii. This research also aims to explore how metaphysics influences not only philosophy but also other disciplines, including science, politics, and social theory.

- iii. This study seeks to clarify misconceptions about metaphysics and to illustrate that it is not merely speculative or abstract but a fundamental aspect of rational inquiry.
- iv. This study aspires to encourage deeper philosophical reflection on the nature of reality, existence, and knowledge.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this research work includes, but not limited to the following:

- i. It challenges the prevailing notion that metaphysics can be entirely avoided in philosophical and scientific discourse.
- ii. By demonstrating the unavoidable presence of metaphysical assumptions in all areas of knowledge, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how foundational concepts shape intellectual inquiry.
- iii. This research has implications beyond philosophy, as it sheds light on the metaphysical underpinnings of scientific theories, ethical frameworks, and political ideologies.
- iv. The study's significance extends to education and intellectual development. It encourages a broader perspective on the role of metaphysics in shaping human understanding, inspiring students and scholars to engage with fundamental questions about reality, existence, and knowledge.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this project work will be limited to the futility of avoiding metaphysics by narrowing it down to how it has become futile for many philosopher's attempt in trying to avoid metaphysics. Such philosophers under consideration shall include the Logical Positivists, David Hume as well as Ayer.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach in this study is the critical analysis. The methodology involves a thorough review of key philosophical texts that discuss metaphysics, including works from logical positivists, empiricists, and contemporary thinkers who have engaged with the question of metaphysical inquiry. By examining perspectives from figures such as Immanuel Kant, Karl Popper, Martin Heidegger, and Jacques Derrida, the study traces the evolution of metaphysical thought and its relevance in modern intellectual discourse. This comparative analysis helps illustrate the persistence of metaphysical assumptions, even in frameworks that claim to reject them.

1.7 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

i. Futility: Futility refers to the quality or state of being pointless, ineffective, or incapable of producing any meaningful result. It is the idea that efforts, actions, or plans are in vain, and no significant outcome or success can be achieved. In philosophical or existential contexts, futility often pertains to endeavors that are ultimately meaningless or

without purpose, no matter how much effort is put into them. It highlights the inherent lack of value or effectiveness in certain actions or pursuits.⁷

ii. Expose: An exposé is a detailed revelation or report that uncovers hidden facts, often related to wrongdoing, corruption, or misconduct. It typically aims to shed light on something that was previously concealed or misunderstood, exposing the truth behind a particular issue or situation. An exposé is usually a critical or investigative work that reveals information with the intent of informing the public or bringing attention to a particular subject.⁸

iii. Metaphysics: Metaphysics is a branch of philosophy that deals with the fundamental nature of reality, existence, and the universe. It explores questions related to what exists, the nature of objects and their properties, space and time, cause and effect, and the relationship between mind and matter. Metaphysics seeks to understand the underlying principles and structures that govern everything in the world, beyond what is observable or measurable. It addresses questions such as "What is being?" "What is the nature of reality?" and "How do we understand the existence of things?"⁹

iv. Metaphysical: Metaphysical refers to anything related to metaphysics, the branch of philosophy that examines the fundamental nature of reality, existence, and the universe. It

⁷ Hornby, A. S. (2005), *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 8th Edition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 90.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁹ Hornby, A. S. *Op. Cit.*, p. 100.

describes concepts, questions, or ideas that go beyond the physical world and observable phenomena, often addressing abstract topics such as the nature of being, causality, time, and existence itself. When something is described as metaphysical, it typically pertains to the foundational aspects of reality that are not easily explained by science or empirical observation.¹⁰

v. Thought: Thought refers to the mental process of considering, reasoning, or reflecting on ideas, concepts, or information. It involves the manipulation of knowledge and mental images to form judgments, decisions, or conclusions. Thought can encompass a wide range of cognitive activities, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, imagining, and planning. It is a central aspect of human cognition and plays a key role in understanding, learning, and interacting with the world.¹¹

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*¹², I. Kant challenges the empiricist and rationalist traditions by arguing that metaphysics is necessary for understanding the world. He posits that human knowledge is shaped by both sensory experience and a priori concepts, which are metaphysical in nature. Kant's distinction between the *noumenon* (things-in-themselves) and *phenomenon* (things as they appear to us) highlights the limits of

¹⁰ Hornby, A. S. *Op. Cit.*, p. 143.

¹¹ Hornby, A. S. *Op. Cit.*, p. 150.

¹² Kant, I. (1996), *Critique of Pure Reason*, (New York: Cambridge University Press), p. 56.

empirical knowledge and stresses the importance of metaphysical categories in organizing experience. According to Kant, metaphysical concepts such as space, time, and causality are not derived from experience but are necessary preconditions for experiencing the world. Thus, Kant's philosophy underlines that metaphysical inquiry cannot be avoided if we are to make sense of reality. His work calls into question attempts to bypass metaphysics, asserting that the structures of our cognition inevitably involve metaphysical assumptions.

In the book titled, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*¹³, Karl Popper defends the role of metaphysics in scientific theory-building, asserting that scientific progress is not only driven by empirical data but also by metaphysical assumptions. Popper introduces the concept of falsifiability as the criterion for demarcating science from non-science, but he also acknowledges that scientific theories rely on certain metaphysical commitments, such as the belief in the uniformity of nature. Popper argues that no scientific theory can be completely free from metaphysical assumptions because these assumptions provide the framework within which hypotheses are generated and tested. In this way, Popper's work reinforces the idea that avoiding metaphysics is futile, as even scientific inquiry presupposes metaphysical principles. Popper's critique of induction and his focus on the falsifiability of theories further illustrate how metaphysical assumptions permeate scientific methodology.

¹³ Popper, K. (2005), *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, (London: Routledge), p. 124.

In *Being and Time*¹⁴, Martin Heidegger addresses the fundamental question of what it means to be, presenting an existential ontology that cannot be divorced from metaphysical concerns. Heidegger critiques traditional metaphysics for its focus on abstract, objective categories that neglect human existence (Dasein). He contends that metaphysics, in its traditional sense, has overlooked the concrete, lived experience of being. However, Heidegger does not advocate for a rejection of metaphysics altogether but rather for a rethinking of it through the lens of existentialism. By analyzing Dasein's relationship with time, death, and authenticity, Heidegger demonstrates that metaphysical inquiry is central to understanding human existence. In this light, Heidegger's work affirms the inescapability of metaphysical questions, arguing that an authentic understanding of being requires a re-engagement with metaphysical issues.

T. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*¹⁵ examines how scientific paradigms shift and evolve, emphasizing the centrality of metaphysical frameworks in guiding scientific inquiry. Kuhn argues that scientific progress is not merely an accumulation of objective facts but involves a shift in the underlying metaphysical assumptions that guide research. During a paradigm shift, scientists begin to view the world in radically different ways, often altering their metaphysical commitments. Kuhn's work challenges the notion of a purely objective, metaphysically neutral science and highlights how even scientific revolutions are grounded in metaphysical assumptions. By examining how scientific

¹⁴ Heidegger M. (1962), *Being and Time*, (New York; Blackwell Publishers), p. 101

¹⁵ Kuhn, T. (1962), *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), p. 56.

communities abandon old paradigms in favor of new ones, Kuhn demonstrates that metaphysical frameworks are both pervasive and essential for understanding scientific development.

In *Word and Object*¹⁶, W. V. Orman Quine critiques the analytic-synthetic distinction and the idea of a pure, objective language free from metaphysical commitments. Quine argues that our understanding of the world is shaped by a network of beliefs, many of which are metaphysical in nature. He challenges the view that metaphysical questions can be neatly separated from empirical inquiries, asserting that all knowledge, including scientific knowledge, is interdependent and grounded in metaphysical assumptions. Quine's holistic view of knowledge, in which no belief is entirely immune from revision, underscores the futility of avoiding metaphysical commitments. His work suggests that metaphysical questions are integral to all aspects of inquiry, even those that claim to operate without them.

L. Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*¹⁷ challenges the possibility of a metaphysically neutral language, arguing that meaning is embedded in the practices and forms of life that give rise to language. Wittgenstein critiques the idea that language can be purified of metaphysical presuppositions, showing how ordinary language contains metaphysical assumptions about the world. He argues that even when we attempt to avoid

¹⁶ Orman Quine, W. V. (2010), *Word and Object*, (London: MIT Press), p. 34.

¹⁷ Wittgenstein, L. (1953), *Philosophical Investigations*, (New York: Wiley-Blackwell), p. 45.

metaphysical speculation, we are still engaged in a metaphysical process, as the meaning of words depends on shared social practices and interpretive frameworks. Wittgenstein's later philosophy demonstrates that the attempt to eliminate metaphysical issues from language is both impractical and misguided, as metaphysical concerns are woven into the fabric of our everyday interactions and understanding.

In *Metaphysics: A Very Short Introduction*¹⁸, S. Mumford provides a clear and accessible overview of metaphysical concepts and their significance. He addresses fundamental metaphysical questions, such as the nature of existence, causality, and time, and argues that metaphysics cannot be avoided without engaging in self-contradiction. Mumford challenges the idea that metaphysics is merely speculative or irrelevant, emphasizing that metaphysical inquiry is essential for understanding the world. By discussing how metaphysical questions underpin our scientific, ethical, and everyday reasoning, Mumford's book affirms the necessity of metaphysical exploration and the futility of attempting to sidestep it.

In *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*¹⁹, Edmund Husserl critiques the neglect of metaphysical inquiry in modern science and philosophy. He argues that the development of scientific thought has been guided by an implicit metaphysical framework that has been obscured by the dominance of empirical methods.

¹⁸ Mumford, S. (2012), *Metaphysics: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 66

¹⁹ Husserl, E. (1970), *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, (Illinois: Northwestern University Press), p. 45.

Husserl advocates for a return to transcendental phenomenology, which seeks to uncover the fundamental structures of experience that underlie all knowledge. He contends that scientific and philosophical knowledge cannot be fully understood without addressing the metaphysical assumptions that shape our perception of reality. Husserl's work is a powerful critique of the rejection of metaphysics, demonstrating how metaphysical questions are central to the project of understanding human experience.

F. Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*²⁰ explores the origins of moral and metaphysical concepts, tracing their development and influence on contemporary values. Nietzsche critiques the metaphysical foundations of traditional moral systems, particularly those rooted in Christianity, and questions the role of metaphysical assumptions in shaping human values. His genealogical approach shows how metaphysical concepts are deeply embedded in the structures of power and society. Nietzsche's work illustrates that metaphysics cannot be divorced from practical and ethical concerns, contributing to the argument that metaphysical inquiry is essential for understanding human life and social systems.

In *Of Grammatology*²¹, J. Derrida critiques the tradition of Western metaphysics, particularly the idea that words have stable, objective meanings. Derrida argues that metaphysical assumptions about language and meaning are foundational to Western

²⁰ Nietzsche, F. (1887), *On the Genealogy of Morals*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 45.

²¹ Derrida, J. *Op. Cit.*, p. 33.

philosophy, and he introduces the concept of deconstruction to show how these assumptions are always already embedded in our thinking. His work demonstrates that even when we attempt to reject metaphysics, we are still engaged in metaphysical questions. Derrida's deconstructionist approach reveals the inescapability of metaphysical issues, showing that attempts to eliminate them only reinforce their presence.

P. Iroegbu's *Metaphysics: The Kpim of Philosophy*²² offers a distinctive perspective on metaphysical inquiry that connects deeply with the central thesis of the futility of avoiding metaphysics. In his exploration, Iroegbu seeks to demonstrate that metaphysics is an inherent part of human thought and existence, whether explicitly acknowledged or not. This aligns with the notion that to dismiss or evade metaphysical inquiry is ultimately futile, as metaphysical assumptions shape and inform other fields of study and practices, often unconsciously. Iroegbu emphasizes that metaphysics provides the foundational framework for understanding reality. His argument begins with the premise that every worldview, regardless of the discipline—whether science, politics, ethics, or religion—relies on metaphysical assumptions. Metaphysics, according to Iroegbu, is not simply a specialized branch of philosophy but the fundamental mode of engaging with the world itself. The futility of avoiding metaphysics becomes evident when one

²² Iroegbu, P. (1995), *Metaphysics, The Kpim of Philosophy*, (Owerri: International Universities Press), p. 34.

recognizes that even attempts to reject metaphysical discourse implicitly presuppose metaphysical positions. For instance, rejecting metaphysics often invokes the metaphysical assumption that human reason or experience can escape the scope of metaphysical categories like existence, causality, and being.

In *Metaphysics*, Aristotle famously begins with the assertion that “All men by nature desire to know”²³. This foundational statement, as translated by W.D. Ross, underscores the inherent human impulse toward knowledge—an impulse that inevitably leads to metaphysical inquiry. For Aristotle, metaphysics is not merely one branch among others; it is the "first philosophy" or the "science of being qua being", concerned with the fundamental nature of reality, existence, and the causes and principles that underlie all things. This passage aligns directly with the argument of the futility of avoiding metaphysics, as Aristotle makes clear that even the most basic human curiosity is rooted in metaphysical questioning. Whether one examines nature, ethics, politics, or art, one cannot escape dealing with concepts like substance, causality, unity, change, and potentiality—core metaphysical themes. Therefore, to avoid metaphysics is to deny the very structure of human reasoning and inquiry. Furthermore, Aristotle critiques those who attempt to dismiss metaphysical speculation. He shows that even critics of metaphysics unwittingly engage in metaphysical assumptions—for instance, about the reality of the

²³ Aristotle, (2001), *Metaphysics*. Translated by W.D. Ross. In *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited by Richard McKeon, (New York: Modern Library), p. 32.

world, the nature of truth, or the reliability of sense perception. Thus, Aristotle's work offers a powerful philosophical grounding for the claim that metaphysics is inescapable, making any effort to sideline it not only impractical but self-refuting.

J. Omoregbe's *Metaphysics Without Tears: A Systematic Historical Study*²⁴ offers a lucid, accessible, and historically grounded introduction to metaphysics, which directly supports the argument that metaphysics is unavoidable in human inquiry. Omoregbe's central aim in this work is to demystify metaphysics, presenting it not as a distant or obscure field, but as an essential and inescapable part of philosophical and rational thought. Omoregbe intentionally structures the book to eliminate the intellectual intimidation often associated with metaphysical discourse. By removing unnecessary jargon and grounding the subject in human experience and history, he shows that metaphysical inquiry is both natural and indispensable. This educational approach reinforces the thesis that metaphysics cannot be sidelined simply because it appears difficult or abstract. The supposed "tears" often associated with metaphysics are, as he argues, the result of misunderstanding its purpose and relevance—not of the discipline itself. In his historical analysis, Omoregbe traces the evolution of metaphysical thought from the pre-Socratic philosophers through Plato, Aristotle, scholastic thinkers, and into modern philosophy. This historical trajectory demonstrates that every major philosophical

²⁴ Omoregbe, J. (1996), *Metaphysics Without Tears: A Systematic Historical Study*, (Ikeja: Joja Educational Research and Publisher Ltd), p. 56.

epoch has engaged with metaphysical questions, whether about being, substance, causality, or God. Importantly, even periods that claimed to reject metaphysics (such as logical positivism or radical empiricism) eventually had to revisit metaphysical assumptions to ground their arguments. This pattern underscores Omoregbe's implicit argument: attempts to avoid metaphysics always end in failure or contradiction because metaphysics is the very basis upon which reasoned thought is built.

CHAPTER TWO

METAPHYSICS: MEANING AND REJECTION

2.1 ORIGIN AND NATURE OF METAPHYSICS

Metaphysics is a fundamental branch of philosophy that investigates the nature, structure, and origin of reality. It seeks to understand what exists, what it means to exist, and how different aspects of reality are related. The term "metaphysics" is derived from the Greek words *meta* (meaning "beyond" or "after") and *physika* (meaning "physics"), which points to its position in Aristotle's corpus, where his writings on "first philosophy" came after those on natural science²⁵. Essentially, metaphysics asks profound questions about being, reality, and the universe as a whole. It examines concepts such as existence, identity, time, space, causality, possibility, and necessity. One of the earliest and most significant contributions to metaphysical thought comes from Aristotle, who defined metaphysics as the "science of being qua being"—that is, the study of being in its most general form, not limited to any specific kind of being.²⁶ For Aristotle, metaphysics was concerned with the first causes and principles of things, making it the most universal and foundational of all philosophical inquiries. Metaphysics has since developed into several

²⁵ Aristotle (2001), *Metaphysics*. Translated by W.D. Ross. In *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited by Richard McKeon, (New York: Modern Library), p. 67.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

subfields, including ontology (the study of being and existence), cosmology (the study of the universe), and theology (the study of the divine).

In the modern era, metaphysical inquiry faced both criticism and revitalization. René Descartes, for instance, famously asserted the primacy of the mind in metaphysical reasoning with his cogito argument, "Cogito, ergo sum" ("I think, therefore I am"), highlighting the certainty of self-consciousness as the foundation of metaphysical knowledge²⁷. Later, Immanuel Kant challenged the speculative nature of traditional metaphysics by arguing that human understanding is limited to phenomena—things as they appear to us—and cannot grasp noumena—things as they are in themselves²⁸. Nevertheless, Kant did not discard metaphysics entirely; rather, he attempted to reformulate it within the limits of human reason. Contemporary metaphysics continues to explore age-old questions while addressing new issues raised by science, language, and logic. Analytic philosophers like W.V.O. Quine questioned the sharp distinction between metaphysics and empirical science, arguing that metaphysics is continuous with scientific

²⁷ Descartes, R. (1996), *Meditations on First Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 73.

²⁸ Kant, I. (1998), *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 90.

theory²⁹. Others, such as David Lewis, have developed detailed theories about possible worlds to explain modal concepts like necessity and possibility.³⁰

Despite its abstract nature, metaphysics remains relevant because it provides the foundational assumptions upon which other branches of philosophy and science depend. Questions about whether the mind is distinct from the body, whether free will exists, or whether there are abstract entities like numbers, all fall within the realm of metaphysics. It challenges individuals to reflect on the deeper structures of reality and our place within it. At its core, metaphysics is concerned with *what is*, in the most general and fundamental sense. It examines the essential structures and features of reality that underpin all phenomena, making it not just a branch of philosophy but its foundational pillar. As such, metaphysics seeks to uncover truths that are not observable by empirical means but are known through reason, reflection, and logical analysis. This includes topics like substance, form, matter, cause, unity, and multiplicity. Metaphysical inquiry goes beyond the empirical world studied by the sciences and asks questions that science alone cannot answer—for example, “What is time?”, “What is a person?”, or “Does anything exist necessarily?”

²⁹ Quine, W.V.O. (1951), “Two Dogmas of Empiricism.” *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 60, no. 1, pp. 20–43.

³⁰ Lewis, D. (1986), *On the Plurality of Worlds*, (Oxford: Blackwell), p. 17.

Ontology, often considered the central sub-branch of metaphysics, deals specifically with the study of *being* or *existence*. It explores what entities exist and how they can be categorized and related within a hierarchy. Ontological debates include whether abstract entities like numbers, properties, or even fictional characters have any kind of real existence. For instance, Plato posited the existence of immaterial Forms or Ideas as the most real entities, whereas Aristotle grounded reality in concrete substances and immanent forms³¹. These discussions continue to evolve in contemporary philosophy, where thinkers question the status of universals, particulars, and the nature of identity over time. Another important theme in metaphysics is causality, which examines how and why things happen. Aristotle distinguished four causes—material, formal, efficient, and final—which together explain the existence and nature of any given object³². The notion of cause has since evolved, particularly under the influence of modern science and philosophy. David Hume famously critiqued the idea of causation as something necessary or observable, suggesting that causality is not a rationally demonstrable connection but rather a habit of thought developed from repeated experiences.³³ His empiricist critique deeply challenged metaphysical speculation and influenced later thinkers like Kant.

³¹ Plato (1992), *The Republic*. Translated by G.M.A. Grube, revised by C.D.C. Reeve, (London: Hackett Publishing), p. 13.

³² Aristotle, (1930), *Physics*. Translated by R.P. Hardie and R.K. Gaye, (London: Internet Classics Archive), p. 45.

³³ Hume, D. (1999), *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 67.

Metaphysical realism and anti-realism represent two major positions regarding the nature of reality. Metaphysical realism holds that there is a mind-independent reality that exists regardless of our perceptions or conceptual schemes. In contrast, anti-realism suggests that reality, or at least aspects of it, is in some way dependent on human thought, language, or experience. These debates are especially prominent in discussions of truth, existence, and objectivity. Hilary Putnam, for example, shifted from a realist to a more pragmatic stance, arguing that metaphysical debates often hinge on assumptions about language and meaning.³⁴

The problem of universals—whether properties like "redness" or "beauty" exist independently of particular things—has long been a central metaphysical question. Realists argue that universals exist objectively, either in a Platonic realm or within things themselves (Aristotelian realism), whereas nominalists argue that these are mere names without independent existence. This discussion has significant implications for philosophy of language, epistemology, and even theology. Metaphysics also tackles questions about time and space, asking whether they are absolute realities or mere relational constructs. Thinkers like Isaac Newton supported the idea of absolute space and time, whereas Gottfried Leibniz argued for a relational view, claiming that space and time

³⁴ Putnam, H. (1981), *Reason, Truth and History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 89.

are systems of relations between objects and events³⁵. In the 20th century, metaphysical inquiry into time evolved into the debates between A-theory (which sees time as dynamic and flowing) and B-theory (which sees all points in time as equally real, with no objective "present"). These debates intersect with physics, especially with the theory of relativity.

Metaphysical inquiry extends to the nature of mind and consciousness, often intersecting with philosophy of mind. Questions about whether the mind is purely physical, whether consciousness can be reduced to neural processes, or whether mental states have causal efficacy are deeply metaphysical. Dualist theories, like that of Descartes, argue that mind and body are distinct substances³⁶, while physicalist theories assert that everything about the mind can be explained in terms of brain functions. Metaphysics is not merely an abstract pursuit; it forms the backbone of philosophical thinking. It influences other domains like ethics, epistemology, science, and even religion. While often critiqued for being speculative or obscure, metaphysics endures because it tackles the most profound questions human beings can ask—questions about existence, reality, and the meaning of it all.

2.2 WHAT IS THE PROPER OBJECT OF METAPHYSICS

³⁵ Newton, I. and Leibniz, G. W. (1956), *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p. 109.

³⁶ Descartes, R. *Op. Cit.* p. 81.

Metaphysics, as a branch of philosophy, is concerned with the fundamental nature of reality. The proper object of metaphysics has been a subject of philosophical inquiry since the time of Aristotle, who is often regarded as the father of the discipline. In his seminal work *Metaphysics*, Aristotle identifies "being qua being" as the primary object of metaphysical investigation. This means that metaphysics is not concerned with any particular kind of being, like physical or mathematical entities, but with being as such—what it means to be, in the most general and universal sense.³⁷ Aristotle distinguishes metaphysics from other sciences by emphasizing that it investigates the first principles and causes of being. These principles include substance (*ousia*), essence, and the categories of being. For Aristotle, substance is the most fundamental category and serves as the underlying reality that supports all attributes and changes. Metaphysics, therefore, seeks to understand the nature of substance, causality, and the conditions that make existence possible.³⁸ In the scholastic tradition, particularly in the works of Thomas Aquinas, the proper object of metaphysics is further clarified. Aquinas asserts that metaphysics deals with "ens commune," or "being in general," and that it investigates reality from the standpoint of its most universal aspects, such as unity, truth, goodness, and existence. Aquinas also introduces the notion of metaphysics as "the science of being

³⁷ Aristotle. (1984), *Metaphysics*. Translated by W.D. Ross. In *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p. 23.

³⁸ Aquinas, T. (1981), *Summa Theologiae*. Translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, (London: Christian Classics), p. 51.

as being," reaffirming and extending Aristotle's framework while integrating it with Christian theology.³⁹

Modern philosophers, such as Immanuel Kant, shift the emphasis of metaphysical inquiry. Kant critiques traditional metaphysics for overreaching the bounds of human reason and proposes a "critical" metaphysics that focuses on the conditions for the possibility of experience. For Kant, the proper object of metaphysics is not being in itself, but the a priori structures of human cognition that shape our experience of reality.⁴⁰ Thus, metaphysics becomes a reflective inquiry into the faculties of the human mind. Contemporary metaphysics continues to debate its proper object. Analytic philosophers like W.V.O. Quine and David Lewis consider metaphysics as the inquiry into the most general features of reality, such as identity, modality, space, time, and causation. For them, metaphysics is closely tied to logic and the formal structures of language that describe reality⁴¹. Despite the diversity of approaches, there remains a common thread: metaphysics seeks to uncover the foundational aspects of existence that underlie and unify all things. The proper object of metaphysics has evolved from Aristotle's notion of "being qua being" to include considerations of cognitive structure, language, and logical form. Whether approached from a classical, medieval, modern, or contemporary perspective, metaphysics remains the philosophical endeavor to understand the most general and fundamental aspects of reality.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 67.

⁴⁰ Kant, I. *Op. Cit.*, p. 100.

⁴¹ Lewis, D. *Op. Cit.*, p. 55.

2.3 CASUALITY OF BEING

The causality of being is a foundational theme in metaphysics, addressing the principle by which all beings come into existence, are sustained, and interact with one another. This concept explores not just the fact that things exist, but how they exist and the principles or causes that underlie their being. It involves the relationship between essence and existence, act and potency, and the dependence of contingent beings on a necessary cause. Throughout the history of philosophy, this topic has been approached from various angles by thinkers such as Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and Martin Heidegger, each offering unique insights into the causal foundations of being.

The discussion of causality in Western philosophy begins with Aristotle, who introduced the concept of the four causes—material, formal, efficient, and final—as a comprehensive explanation of why a being exists in the way it does. According to Aristotle, to fully understand a being, one must grasp all four types of causes that contribute to its existence. The material cause is the substance out of which something is made; the formal cause is its shape or essence; the efficient cause is the agent or process that brings it into being; and the final cause is the purpose or end for which it exists⁴². This framework allows Aristotle to explain not only the structure of individual beings but

⁴² Aristotle, *Op. Cit.*, p. 50.

also the ordered structure of reality, where beings are constantly changing and moving toward their ends. In this sense, causality is deeply tied to being—it is the reason beings come into existence, persist, and fulfill their nature. Thomas Aquinas builds upon Aristotle's foundation but introduces a more profound metaphysical distinction between essence (what a thing is) and existence (that a thing is). For Aquinas, this distinction lies at the heart of the causality of being. In his view, no contingent being can explain its own existence, because essence does not contain existence within itself. Therefore, existence must be received from an external source. Aquinas argues that beings participate in existence through a cause that is pure being itself, namely God. God is the only being whose essence is identical to His existence—He is *ipsum esse subsistens* (subsistent being itself). Hence, all beings derive their existence from God as their efficient and sustaining cause. This establishes a vertical causality in which all contingent beings depend on a necessary being for their existence. Aquinas further explains the causality of being through the Aristotelian distinction between act (*actus*) and potency (*potentia*). All beings, except for God, are composites of act and potency. They have potentials which, through the action of causes, are actualized. For instance, a seed has the potential to become a tree, and it becomes so through causal interaction with sunlight, water, and nutrients. This principle shows that causality is the bridge between what can be and what is. The transition from potency to act is only possible through a cause already in act, leading Aquinas to the conclusion that there must be a first cause that is pure act, without

any potency—again, identified as God. Thus, the entire chain of being is causally dependent on the one whose being is fully actual.

With the rise of modern philosophy, especially in the work of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz, the notion of causality of being began to shift from metaphysical to more rationalist and mechanistic accounts. While Descartes still held that God was the cause of the world, he emphasized clear and distinct ideas as the basis of knowledge, turning attention away from metaphysical structure. Spinoza went further, equating God with Nature (*Deus sive Natura*), suggesting that all beings are merely modes of a single infinite substance. In this view, causality becomes immanent rather than transcendent—God does not create beings from outside but is the very being of all things. In the Kantian critique, Immanuel Kant revolutionized metaphysics by arguing that causality is not a property of things in themselves but a category of human understanding. For Kant, we impose the notion of causality onto the phenomena we experience; we cannot know whether things-in-themselves (noumena) follow causal laws. Thus, metaphysics, including the causality of being, is limited to the realm of human experience and cannot reach beyond it⁴³. Kant's critique restricted traditional metaphysics but opened the door for deeper reflection on the conditions of possibility for knowledge and experience. In the 20th century, Martin Heidegger radically reinterpreted the question of being. For Heidegger, traditional metaphysics had focused too much on beings and their causes, neglecting the deeper question of Being itself (*Sein*). He proposed the idea of the

⁴³ Kant, I. *Op. Cit.*, p. 78.

ontological difference—the distinction between Being (Sein) and beings (Seiendes). Heidegger argued that understanding the causality of being requires us to ask not just what causes beings, but why there is Being at all and why it reveals itself to us in particular ways.⁴⁴ In his view, causality is not simply a chain of events or acts but is related to the unfolding of Being in history and human existence.

2.4 VARIOUS REJECTIONS OF METAPHYSICS

The discipline of metaphysics, often referred to as the study of being and reality beyond the physical or empirical, has come under intense scrutiny and criticism throughout philosophical history. Three major thinkers—David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and A.J. Ayer—stand out in the history of philosophy for their influential rejections of traditional metaphysics. Though their arguments stem from different philosophical backgrounds—empiricism, transcendental idealism, and logical positivism, respectively—they share a common skepticism toward metaphysical claims that transcend human experience or fail to meet rigorous epistemological standards.

2.4.1 David Hume’s Rejection of Metaphysics

David Hume, an 18th-century Scottish empiricist and philosopher, is widely known for his skeptical approach towards metaphysics. His rejection of metaphysics is rooted in his broader epistemological framework, which emphasizes empirical observation and

⁴⁴ Heidegger, M. (1962), *Being and Time*, (New York: Harper & Row), p. 70.

experience as the only legitimate sources of human knowledge. In his seminal work, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume argues that most metaphysical claims, such as those concerning substance, causality, the soul, and God, cannot be grounded in sensory experience or demonstrative reasoning and therefore must be dismissed as meaningless or speculative. Hume's empiricism leads him to distinguish between two types of knowledge: "relations of ideas" and "matters of fact"⁴⁵. Relations of ideas are analytic truths, such as those found in mathematics and logic, which are necessarily true and discoverable by thought alone. Matters of fact, on the other hand, are contingent truths about the world and must be verified through experience. Metaphysical assertions, according to Hume, do not fall into either category. For instance, the concept of a "necessary connection" between cause and effect, central to metaphysical reasoning, is scrutinized by Hume. He famously argues that our belief in causality arises from the habit of seeing events constantly conjoined, not from any rational insight into a necessary linkage between them.⁴⁶

In his *Enquiry*, Hume directs his critique at metaphysical speculation that relies on abstract reasoning divorced from empirical content. He asserts that such reasoning leads to confusion and illusion rather than truth. He writes, "If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental

⁴⁵ Hume, D. *Op. Cit.* p. 100.

⁴⁶ Hume, D. *Op. Cit.* p. 105.

reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion". This passage encapsulates his profound skepticism about the legitimacy of metaphysical inquiry that cannot be supported by logical deduction or empirical verification. Hume also challenges metaphysical notions of the self and personal identity. He denies the existence of a permanent, unchanging self, claiming instead that the self is nothing more than a bundle of perceptions in constant flux. This radical idea undermines many metaphysical doctrines that presuppose the existence of a substantial self or soul.

Hume's rejection of metaphysics had a significant influence on later philosophers, especially the logical positivists of the 20th century, who shared his view that meaningful statements must be empirically verifiable. His skeptical stance also profoundly impacted Immanuel Kant, who famously declared that Hume awoke him from his "dogmatic slumber" and inspired him to develop his own critical philosophy aimed at grounding metaphysical knowledge within the limits of human cognition. Hume's rejection of metaphysics is a cornerstone of his empiricist and skeptical philosophy. He contends that metaphysical claims, lacking empirical or logical foundations, are ultimately nonsensical and should be excluded from serious philosophical discourse. His rigorous application of empirical standards to philosophical inquiry marks a turning point in the history of philosophy, steering it toward a more scientifically informed and critically cautious path.

2.4.2 Immanuel Kant's Rejection of Metaphysics

Immanuel Kant's approach to metaphysics does not amount to a wholesale rejection of the discipline but rather a critical redefinition and limitation of its scope. In his groundbreaking work, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant embarked on what he termed a "Copernican revolution" in philosophy—shifting the focus of inquiry from how our knowledge conforms to objects to how objects conform to the structure of human cognition. His goal was to assess whether metaphysics, traditionally understood as knowledge of things beyond experience (such as God, the soul, and the cosmos as a whole), could have the same certainty and necessity as mathematics or natural science. His conclusion was that traditional metaphysical claims are unverifiable and speculative, and thus must be critically limited.

Kant's critique hinges on his distinction between phenomena and noumena. Phenomena are things as they appear to us, shaped by the innate structures of human sensibility (space and time) and understanding (the categories). Noumena, on the other hand, are things-in-themselves—realities that exist independently of our perception. According to Kant, while we can know the phenomenal world because it is constructed by our cognitive faculties, we cannot have knowledge of noumenal reality. Traditional metaphysics, which attempts to speak of the noumenal realm—God, the immortal soul, or the universe as an unconditioned whole—therefore overreaches the bounds of human reason.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Kant, *I. Op. Cit.*, p. 97.

One of Kant's key criticisms is that pure reason leads to contradictions (or antinomies) when it tries to grasp ultimate realities. For instance, reason can equally prove and disprove that the world has a beginning in time or that there is a necessary being. These antinomies expose the limitations of speculative metaphysics: when reason ventures beyond experience, it collapses into self-contradiction. Thus, metaphysical assertions such as the existence of a first cause or an immortal soul, while meaningful within religious or moral frameworks, cannot be established through theoretical reason. Kant did not deny the possibility of these ideas but insisted that they must be relegated to the realm of practical reason—that is, as postulates necessary for moral thought, rather than knowledge derived from speculative reason.

Kant was particularly critical of rational psychology, rational cosmology, and rational theology, which he collectively termed the “transcendental illusions” of metaphysics.⁴⁸ Rational psychology posits the soul as a simple, immortal substance; rational cosmology claims to know the totality of the universe; and rational theology seeks to demonstrate the existence of God. In each case, Kant demonstrated that these disciplines rest on misuses of reason—confusing the conditions for the possibility of experience with the nature of things in themselves. He argued that the mind's natural tendency to seek the unconditioned leads to these illusions, but that philosophy must resist this urge and recognize the limits of human cognition. Despite this rejection of speculative metaphysics,

⁴⁸ Guyer, P. (2006), *Kant*, (New York: Routledge), p. 45.

Kant did not discard metaphysics altogether. Rather, he sought to rescue metaphysics by transforming it into a critical inquiry into the conditions of human knowledge. For Kant, metaphysics is legitimate only when it investigates the a priori structures that make experience possible—what he calls transcendental philosophy. In this sense, Kant redefined metaphysics not as knowledge of a transcendent reality but as a science of the limits and capabilities of reason itself.⁴⁹

2.4.3 A.J. Ayer’s Rejection of Metaphysics

A.J. Ayer’s rejection of metaphysics is one of the most influential positions in the logical positivist tradition. Ayer, in his seminal work *Language, Truth and Logic*, argued that metaphysical statements are cognitively meaningless because they do not meet the criteria of empirical verifiability. According to Ayer, for a statement to be meaningful, it must either be tautological (i.e., analytically true) or empirically verifiable—that is, capable of being confirmed or disconfirmed through sensory experience⁵⁰. Metaphysical propositions, such as those concerning the existence of God, the soul, or the absolute, fail this test. They are neither empirically testable nor logically necessary and, as such, are devoid of literal meaning.

Ayer’s verification principle is central to his critique. This principle posits that “a proposition is only meaningful if it is verifiable by sense experience or is analytically

⁴⁹ Allison, H.E. (2004), *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*, (New York: Yale University Press), p. 78.

⁵⁰ Ayer, A. J. *Op. Cit.*, p. 78.

true”⁵¹. Since metaphysical claims do not satisfy these conditions, they are not just false—they are nonsensical. For instance, statements like “The Absolute is infinite” or “God exists beyond time and space” are not wrong in the traditional sense; they are, in Ayer’s view, simply incapable of being meaningfully discussed. As such, metaphysics, which aims to make claims about what lies beyond the realm of experience, becomes an exercise in linguistic confusion. Ayer draws a parallel between metaphysical statements and expressions of emotion or moral sentiment. Just as exclamations like “Hurrah for liberty!” do not state facts but rather express attitudes or feelings, metaphysical statements, in Ayer’s view, may express the speaker’s inclinations or attitudes but cannot be objectively assessed or debated. He critiques metaphysicians for attempting to say what cannot be said, for stepping beyond the boundaries of meaningful discourse set by logic and empirical science. For Ayer, language has its limits, and metaphysics consistently violates these limits by trying to articulate what lies beyond experience. Ayer’s stance is not merely a critique of traditional metaphysical doctrines, but a wholesale dismissal of metaphysics as a legitimate philosophical activity. He views the discipline as fundamentally flawed in its method and purpose. According to him, philosophers who engage in metaphysics are not making factual assertions, but are misusing language in a way that leads to confusion rather than clarity. His goal is to redirect philosophical inquiry toward the analysis of language and the clarification of

⁵¹ Ayer, A. J. *Op. Cit.*, p. 81.

concepts, thus aligning philosophy more closely with the sciences and freeing it from speculative metaphysics.

Despite its influence, Ayer's position has been widely critiqued. Some have argued that the verification principle itself is not empirically verifiable and thus fails by its own standard. Others contend that metaphysical reasoning, while not always empirical, plays a critical role in shaping our conceptual frameworks and exploring foundational questions that science alone cannot answer. Nevertheless, Ayer's rejection of metaphysics marked a significant moment in 20th-century philosophy, underscoring a shift toward linguistic analysis and scientific rigor in philosophical inquiry.

2.4.4 Contemporary Analytic Rejection of Metaphysics

The contemporary analytic rejection of metaphysics emerged prominently in the early 20th century, rooted in a desire for clarity, logical rigor, and empirical verifiability in philosophical discourse. This movement was driven by thinkers like Bertrand Russell, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and most influentially, members of the Vienna Circle, such as Rudolf Carnap, Moritz Schlick, and Otto Neurath. These philosophers were heavily influenced by developments in formal logic and the success of empirical sciences, leading them to challenge the validity and usefulness of traditional metaphysical inquiry. Metaphysical statements, they argued, lacked empirical content and logical clarity, thus rendering them meaningless within the framework of what they saw as legitimate philosophy. One of the most decisive attacks on metaphysics came from logical

positivism, a philosophical school associated with the Vienna Circle. Logical positivists adhered to the verification principle, which holds that a statement is meaningful only if it can be empirically verified or is analytically true (i.e., true by definition). According to this view, metaphysical propositions—such as those concerning God, the soul, or the nature of being—cannot be empirically tested nor are they tautologies, and thus fail to meet the standard of meaningfulness. Rudolf Carnap, in his influential essay *The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language*, dismissed metaphysical statements as “pseudo-statements”—grammatically well-formed but semantically empty. He argued that metaphysical language misuses words that appear to refer to something but in fact do not correspond to any verifiable reality.⁵²

A.J. Ayer, in his work *Language, Truth and Logic*, further advanced this critique. He echoed the verification principle and famously declared that traditional metaphysical claims are nonsense. According to Ayer, statements such as “God exists” or “There is an absolute being” are not false, but rather meaningless, because they cannot be tested by experience. He wrote: “If a sentence makes no verifiable assertion about the world, it is devoid of factual content.”⁵³ For Ayer, the task of philosophy was not to speculate about transcendent realities, but to analyze language and clarify the logic of scientific statements. Thus, metaphysics was not just wrong—it was cognitively empty. This

⁵² Carnap, R. (1931), *The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language*, (London: Routledge), p. 67.

⁵³ Ayer, A.J. *Op. Cit.*, p. 156.

rejection of metaphysics was also evident in early Wittgenstein's philosophy, particularly in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921). Wittgenstein maintained that the limits of language are the limits of the world—that is, only what can be said clearly and logically corresponds to reality. Metaphysical propositions, he claimed, attempt to say what can only be shown (such as the form of the world or the conditions for meaning). Hence, they fall outside the bounds of legitimate discourse. “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent,” he famously concluded, encapsulating the analytic stance toward metaphysics.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Wittgenstein, L. (1921), *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 161.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FUTILITY OF REJECTION OF METAPHYSICS

3.1 THE ROLE OF METAPHYSICS IN SCIENCE AND EPISTEMOLOGY

Metaphysics, often regarded as the study of being, reality, and the fundamental structure of existence, is not merely an abstract or speculative field detached from practical knowledge. Rather, it deeply informs and shapes the methodologies, assumptions, and conceptual tools of both science and epistemology. Despite the common perception that science is strictly empirical and that metaphysics is speculative, many philosophers and scientists have demonstrated that metaphysical presuppositions are embedded in scientific reasoning and are essential to the very possibility of epistemological inquiry.

In the realm of science, metaphysics provides the foundational assumptions that precede and make sense of empirical investigation. Scientific realism, for example, is a metaphysical stance which asserts that the entities postulated by scientific theories such as electrons, black holes, or genes exist independently of our observations or linguistic

practices. Without this realist assumption, much of science would collapse into instrumentalism, where theories are seen merely as tools for prediction rather than as true or approximately true descriptions of reality. Scientific explanation, therefore, is often underpinned by metaphysical commitments about causality, laws of nature, and the continuity of the universe. Nancy Cartwright argues that “scientific laws do not simply mirror nature but are deeply entwined with metaphysical ideals about order, necessity, and universality”⁵⁵.

In epistemology, the foundational questions about the sources, scope, and limits of human knowledge are inherently metaphysical. For example, the debate between rationalism and empiricism is rooted in metaphysical views about the nature of the mind and its relation to the external world. Rationalists argue that knowledge is derived from innate ideas or reason alone, implying a metaphysical structure of the mind that can access universal truths. Empiricists, on the other hand, hold that knowledge comes primarily through sensory experience, which presupposes a metaphysical framework where objects exist independently and can be perceived. Discussions of skepticism such as whether one can be certain of the existence of the external world are metaphysical at their core. These issues cannot be resolved by observation alone but require philosophical analysis of what it means to “know” and what reality consists of.

⁵⁵ Cartwright, N. (1983), *How the Laws of Physics Lie*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 15.

Contemporary epistemological theories such as foundationalism, coherentism, and reliabilism all rest on different metaphysical conceptions of justification and truth. Foundationalism, for instance, relies on the idea that there exist basic beliefs that are self-evident or indubitable, which assumes a metaphysical ground of certainty. Coherentism depends on the metaphysical coherence of a belief system as a whole, and reliabilism assumes that beliefs are justified if they are produced by reliable cognitive processes, which in turn presupposes a metaphysical account of causality and process reliability. Even in the philosophy of science, movements such as logical positivism, which sought to eliminate metaphysics from meaningful discourse, ultimately failed because their own principles rested on unverifiable metaphysical claims. The verification principle itself stating that a statement is only meaningful if it is empirically verifiable is not empirically verifiable, thus exposing the internal contradiction in avoiding metaphysics entirely. Philosophers like Michael Polanyi and Hans Reichenbach eventually acknowledged that metaphysical and epistemological assumptions cannot be fully purged from scientific discourse.

“Metaphysical reflection often serves a regulative function in science and knowledge by providing a critical framework within which empirical data is interpreted”⁵⁶. For instance, the metaphysical assumption of determinism in classical mechanics once guided the interpretation of physical phenomena. When quantum mechanics emerged, it challenged

⁵⁶ Reichenbach, H. (1951), *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy*, (California: University of California Press), p. 45.

this assumption, leading to new debates in both physics and philosophy about the nature of reality, causality, and indeterminacy. This shift illustrates how changes in metaphysical outlook can influence scientific paradigms, echoing Thomas Kuhn’s insight that scientific revolutions involve not just empirical anomalies but profound metaphysical shifts in worldview⁵⁷.

Metaphysics plays a foundational role in both science and epistemology by providing the conceptual framework through which scientific theories are developed and knowledge is interpreted. While science is primarily empirical, relying on observation, experimentation, and the scientific method, it cannot function without metaphysical assumptions that lie beyond direct empirical verification. These include assumptions about the uniformity of nature, the existence of causal relationships, the reality of external objects, and the intelligibility of the universe. For instance, the idea that future events will resemble past patterns — a principle of induction — is not something science can prove, but it is crucial for scientific prediction. As Karl Popper notes, “science begins with myths, and with the criticism of myths,”⁵⁸ highlighting that scientific progress often depends on speculative, metaphysical starting points.

⁵⁷ Kuhn, T. S. (1962), *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), p. 43.

⁵⁸ Popper, K. (1959), *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, (New York: Routledge), p. 21.

In epistemology — the philosophical study of knowledge — metaphysics is equally vital. Questions such as “What is knowledge?”, “What does it mean to know something?”, or “What exists that we can know?” are inherently metaphysical. Epistemological inquiries depend on metaphysical clarity about the nature of reality and the status of the mind in relation to it. For example, Cartesian dualism — the idea that mind and body are two distinct substances — is a metaphysical view that has profound implications for how we understand perception, cognition, and truth. Similarly, “debates between realism and anti-realism in epistemology rest on metaphysical commitments about whether objects exist independently of our perception of them”⁵⁹.

Contemporary philosophers such as W.V.O. Quine have argued that the distinction between metaphysics and empirical science is often blurry. In his famous rejection of the analytic-synthetic distinction, Quine contends that our “statements about the world face the “tribunal of experience” not individually but as a whole, and this includes both scientific hypotheses and metaphysical assumptions”⁶⁰. This holistic view underscores that metaphysics and science are interdependent: metaphysical principles guide the formulation of scientific theories, while empirical findings can influence metaphysical interpretations. Thomas Kuhn’s theory of scientific revolutions also illustrates the metaphysical underpinnings of science. He showed that shifts in scientific paradigms

⁵⁹ Chalmers D. J., (1996), *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 55.

⁶⁰ Quine, W. V. O. (1960), *Word and Object*, (London: MIT Press), p. 32.

such as from Newtonian mechanics to Einsteinian relativity are not just about new empirical data but about changes in the metaphysical worldviews scientists hold⁶¹. A paradigm encompasses a way of seeing the world that includes metaphysical beliefs about space, time, and matter. Hence, rejecting metaphysics would mean ignoring the conceptual lenses through which scientific knowledge is structured and understood.

3.2 METAPHYSICAL ASSUMPTIONS IN ETHICS AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Metaphysical assumptions are deeply entrenched in both ethical and political philosophy, forming the often-unseen foundations upon which theories and arguments are built. Ethics, which deals with notions of right and wrong, virtue, obligation, and the good life, frequently presupposes certain metaphysical beliefs about the nature of reality, human beings, freedom, and value. Similarly, political philosophy, which interrogates power, justice, and the structure of society, is shaped by ontological conceptions of the self, society, and authority. The idea that one can construct ethical or political systems while avoiding metaphysical commitments is ultimately futile, as these domains are inseparably intertwined with metaphysical presuppositions.

In ethics, metaphysical views about human agency, freedom, and personhood are indispensable. For instance, Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy relies on the "notion of

⁶¹ Kuhn, T. S. *Op Cit.*, p. 46.

the rational autonomous subject capable of legislating moral law through reason”⁶². This presumes a metaphysical framework in which persons possess intrinsic worth and freedom, without which Kant’s categorical imperative would collapse. In essence, “utilitarianism, though often presented as empirical and calculative, depends on metaphysical assumptions regarding the comparability of pleasures and pains and the moral significance of subjective experiences”⁶³. These are not merely observational claims but imply a metaphysical view of consciousness and value. Theories of moral realism which argue that there are objective moral truths independent of human opinions also rest on metaphysical grounds. “Moral realism presupposes a moral ontology in which such truths exist and can be discovered”⁶⁴. Anti-realist and relativist positions, while attempting to dismiss metaphysics, still rely on an alternative metaphysical framework that locates moral value in human psychology, social convention, or linguistic practices⁶⁵. Hence, regardless of orientation, ethical theories invoke metaphysical assumptions, whether explicitly or implicitly.

⁶² Kant, I. (1996), *Critique of Practical Reason* (M. Gregor, Trans.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 43.

⁶³ Mill, J. S. (1863), *Utilitarianism*, (London: Parker, Son, and Bourn), p. 89.

⁶⁴ Shafer-Landau, R. (2003), *Moral Realism: A Defence*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 65.

⁶⁵ Mackie, J. L. (1977), *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books), p. 32.

In political philosophy, metaphysical assumptions about human nature and society play a pivotal role. The classic social contract theorists, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau each begin with a metaphysical conception of the state of nature and the intrinsic qualities of human beings. Hobbes sees “humans as self-interested and driven by fear, justifying an authoritarian sovereign”⁶⁶. Locke, on the other hand, “believes in rationality and mutual cooperation, which leads to his vision of limited government and natural rights”⁶⁷. Rousseau’s metaphysical notion of natural goodness corrupted by society underlies his argument for a general will⁶⁸. Each of these political structures is fundamentally built on differing metaphysical pictures of the human condition.

Karl Marx’s political philosophy also rests on a robust metaphysical narrative—historical materialism—which posits that the material conditions of life determine consciousness, ideology, and social structures. His conception of alienation and human essence is inherently metaphysical, portraying humans as fundamentally productive beings alienated from their nature under capitalism. Liberalism, by contrast, is grounded in metaphysical individualism—the belief that individuals are the primary bearers of rights and dignity—

⁶⁶ Hobbes, T. (1996), *Leviathan* (R. Tuck, Ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 11.

⁶⁷ Locke, J. (1988), *Two Treatises of Government* (P. Laslett, Ed.). (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 53.

⁶⁸ Rousseau, J.J. (1977), *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings* (V. Gourevitch, Ed. & Trans.). (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 49.

which informs its commitment to personal liberty, equality before the law, and democratic governance.

Debates around free will and determinism further illustrate the metaphysical grounding of ethical and political concepts. If individuals are entirely determined by prior causes, as some naturalistic frameworks suggest, then moral responsibility and systems of justice based on blame or punishment are undermined. Retributive theories of justice, in particular, depend on the belief in free moral agency—a metaphysical claim. In contrast, rehabilitative or consequentialist models may accommodate deterministic views but still rely on metaphysical notions of harm, welfare, and personhood. Even postmodern and critical theories that attempt to deconstruct metaphysics inevitably invoke their own ontologies. Michel Foucault’s theory of power/knowledge, for instance, challenges Enlightenment ideals of reason and truth, but it is based on a metaphysical conception of power as immanent and productive⁶⁹. Similarly, Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction of metaphysics and his notion of *différance* are themselves metaphysical, though of a different order, emphasizing the impossibility of final meaning and stable presence.⁷⁰

3.3 LANGUAGE, MEANING, AND METAPHYSICAL UNDERPINNINGS

⁶⁹ Foucault, M. (1977), *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.), (New York: Pantheon Books), p. 132.

⁷⁰ Derrida, J. (1976), *Of Grammatology* (G. Spivak, Trans.), (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), p. 51.

Language, as a medium of communication and a tool of human thought, is not merely a neutral vehicle for expressing ideas, it is deeply rooted in metaphysical presuppositions. The connection between language and metaphysics becomes evident when we examine how meaning is derived, how reference is established, and how truth is articulated. Philosophers have long recognized that the structure of language often mirrors, and in many cases shapes, our metaphysical views of the world. The metaphysical significance of language begins with the assumption that words can meaningfully refer to objects, properties, or states of affairs in reality. Classical theories of meaning, such as those proposed by Aristotle and later adopted in different forms by thinkers like Thomas Aquinas, presume a correspondence theory of truth, where language reflects reality. According to this view, “statements are true when they correspond to facts in the world”⁷¹. This implies a metaphysical assumption: that there is an objective reality which can be accurately represented by human thought and language.

The analytic tradition in philosophy further developed these ideas, particularly in the early work of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Bertrand Russell. Russell's theory of descriptions, posited that “language could be logically analyzed to reveal the structure of reality”⁷². His work assumes that the grammar of language is not arbitrary but grounded in the logical form of the world. Wittgenstein, in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, also embraced a

⁷¹ Aristotle, (2001), *Metaphysics* (H. Lawson-Tancred, Trans.), (London: Penguin Classics), p. 45.

⁷² Russell, B. (1905), "On Denoting." *Mind*, 14(56), 479–493.

version of this view, famously stating that "the limits of my language mean the limits of my world"⁷³. Here, he underscores that language sets the boundaries of meaningful discourse, and what cannot be said is beyond the scope of intelligible thought again revealing a metaphysical stance about the structure of meaning.

Wittgenstein revised his earlier views, proposing in his *Philosophical Investigations* that "meaning arises not from logical correspondence but from usage within particular forms of life"⁷⁴. While this shift undermined the strict logical structure of metaphysics, it did not eliminate metaphysical concerns altogether. Instead, it introduced a different kind of metaphysics—one rooted in human practices and forms of life. This version assumes that meaning is not fixed by objects in the world but by communal agreement and linguistic context, reflecting a pragmatic or relativistic metaphysical stance. Structuralist and post-structuralist thinkers such as Ferdinand de Saussure and Jacques Derrida challenged traditional metaphysical foundations by arguing that meaning is differential and never fully present. Saussure emphasized that meaning arises from the difference between signs rather than any inherent connection to reality. Derrida, in *Of Grammatology*, introduced the notion of *différance*—a play on the ideas of difference and deferral—arguing that meaning is always deferred, never fully present, and thus undermines the metaphysical

⁷³ Wittgenstein, L. (1922), *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul), p. 13.

⁷⁴ Wittgenstein, L. (1953), *Philosophical Investigations* (G. E. M. Anscombe, Trans.), (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, p. 63.

assumption of stable reference. In this way, post-structuralist theories deconstruct the very possibility of metaphysical certainty in language, suggesting that language is inherently ambiguous and unstable.

This rejection of classical metaphysics does not mean a complete escape from metaphysical commitments. As many critics point out, even the claim that language defers meaning implies a metaphysical view about the nature of signs, time, and subjectivity. In this sense, post-structuralism replaces one metaphysical framework with another, albeit one that is anti-essentialist and anti-foundationalist. Contemporary philosophy of language, particularly in the work of figures like Donald Davidson and Saul Kripke, has continued to explore the metaphysical implications of reference and naming. Kripke's causal theory of reference argues that names refer to objects not by virtue of descriptive content but through a causal-historical chain of communication⁷⁵. This theory reintroduces metaphysical realism into the philosophy of language by suggesting that names rigidly designate the same object across all possible worlds, thereby affirming an objective ontology that language tracks.

The metaphysical underpinnings of language not only shape philosophical theories but also influence how humans conceive of reality itself. The fundamental act of naming, for example, is not a neutral activity. To name an object or a concept is to presume that it has a stable essence or identity that can be captured by language. This assumption is

⁷⁵ Kripke, S. (1980), *Naming and Necessity*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), p. 54.

metaphysical because it suggests that reality is organized in such a way that it can be carved up into discrete, knowable entities. The belief that words “correspond” to things in the world hinges on a metaphysical realism—i.e., the notion that there is a mind-independent world structured in ways that language can mirror. Philosopher Hilary Putnam, in his discussions on the "model-theoretic argument" and internal realism, emphasized that language does not simply reflect an independently structured reality⁷⁶. Instead, our conceptual schemes—how we carve up and interpret the world—are inseparable from our metaphysical perspectives. Even attempts to construct a metaphysically neutral language, like Rudolf Carnap’s logical positivism, ultimately presuppose metaphysical frameworks about what constitutes meaning and verification. Carnap's strict division between "analytic" and "synthetic" truths aimed to eliminate metaphysical speculation; however, as Quine famously argued in his essay "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," such a distinction is untenable. Quine showed that empirical knowledge and language are interwoven with theoretical assumptions that are themselves not empirically verifiable, thereby reintroducing metaphysical considerations into even the most scientifically rigorous languages.⁷⁷ Language inherently implies the existence of abstract entities such as universals, propositions, and meanings—none of which are strictly observable. When one asserts that "justice is good," the statement presumes that

⁷⁶ Putnam, H. (1981), *Reason, Truth, and History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 32.

⁷⁷ Quine, W. V. O. (1951), “Two Dogmas of Empiricism.” *The Philosophical Review*, 60(1), 20–43.

"justice" and "goodness" are not merely linguistic conventions but real properties or concepts that can be meaningfully related. This leads to the metaphysical debate over universals—whether these abstract terms refer to real, existing forms (realism), are merely linguistic constructs (nominalism), or are conceptual tools (conceptualism). The fact that such debates continue underscores the impossibility of fully divorcing language from metaphysical inquiry⁷⁸.

Language also encodes ontological commitments, which are metaphysical claims about what exists. W.V.O. Quine's idea of "ontological commitment" makes clear that the terms and quantifiers used in a language reveal what the speaker assumes to exist. For instance, saying "there are numbers greater than 100" commits one to the existence of numbers as entities, even if they are abstract. Thus, the very grammar and logical structure of our language can reveal deep metaphysical positions, often without the speaker being aware of them. Contemporary theories in hermeneutics and semiotics reinforce the argument that meaning cannot be fixed outside of a metaphysical horizon. Paul Ricoeur emphasized the "surplus of meaning" in texts, suggesting that language always carries more significance than can be reduced to empirical observation or logical analysis. This surplus is a result of the metaphysical depth of human existence and the symbolic structure of language. From another angle, religious language also illustrates how

⁷⁸ Loux, M. J. (2006), *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (3rd ed.), (London: Routledge), p. 23.

metaphysical assumptions are encoded in speech. Words like “God,” “soul,” “heaven,” or “salvation” are not empirically verifiable, yet they form meaningful parts of many people’s conceptual worlds. Theologians and philosophers such as Paul Tillich and Alvin Plantinga have pointed out that to speak meaningfully about such topics requires at least some metaphysical framework—be it realist, symbolic, or experiential.

3.4 METAPHYSICS IN EVERYDAY LIFE AND HUMAN EXISTENCE

Metaphysics is often regarded as an abstract philosophical endeavor, removed from the practical concerns of daily life. However, a closer examination reveals that metaphysical assumptions deeply influence how individuals live, perceive themselves, relate to others, and interpret the world. Every human being, consciously or not, relies on metaphysical ideas such as identity, causality, time, freedom, purpose, and being. These ideas are not confined to academic discussions but are embedded in everyday language, decision-making, and personal beliefs.

At the core of human experience is the question of *being*—what it means to exist. Martin Heidegger, in his seminal work *Being and Time*, emphasized that human beings (Dasein) are not detached observers but are always already involved in the world. Our awareness of existence, our anticipation of death, and our search for meaning are inherently metaphysical activities⁷⁹. The way we project ourselves into the future, reflect on the past,

⁷⁹ Heidegger, M. (1962), *Being and Time* (J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Trans.), (New York: Harper & Row), p. 53.

or consider possibilities—such as “What should I become?” or “What does my life mean?”—demonstrates that metaphysical inquiry is integral to human existence.

Even simple actions presuppose metaphysical assumptions. For instance, making a promise assumes the persistence of personal identity over time; mourning the death of a loved one implies beliefs about life, death, and perhaps an afterlife. Religious practices, moral commitments, and cultural rituals often depend on metaphysical beliefs about the soul, divine beings, or the structure of reality beyond empirical observation⁸⁰. Thus, metaphysics becomes a lived reality, shaping ethical choices, relationships, and aspirations. Metaphysical concepts are also present in how people understand their place in the universe. The question, "Why am I here?" or "What is my purpose?" is metaphysical at its core. This pursuit of purpose underpins human goals, values, and resilience in the face of suffering. Viktor Frankl, in *Man's Search for Meaning*, argued that the human drive for meaning—even in extreme suffering—reflects a metaphysical dimension of existence that cannot be reduced to biology or psychology alone.⁸¹

Metaphysics influences how individuals think about freedom and responsibility. The belief that one has free will, that one's choices matter, and that moral responsibility is real are all metaphysical positions. Debates between determinism and libertarian free will, for

⁸⁰ Tillich, P. (1951), *The Courage to Be*, (New York: Yale University Press), p. 56.

⁸¹ Frankl, V. E. (1984), *Man's Search for Meaning*, (London: Washington Square Press), p. 32.

example, may seem abstract, but they profoundly affect how people perceive guilt, justice, and autonomy. Without metaphysical grounding, key concepts in law, ethics, and society become unstable.⁸² Metaphysical reflection plays a central role in self-knowledge and personal growth. Philosophers like Søren Kierkegaard viewed the self as a synthesis of possibility and necessity, rooted in a metaphysical struggle to become one's true self⁸³. In contemporary times, issues of identity—such as gender, race, or consciousness—often require metaphysical articulation. For example, the question “What does it mean to be a person?” invokes ontological categories, distinguishing between mere biological existence and moral or legal personhood. The rise of technology and artificial intelligence also brings metaphysical questions into everyday concerns. When people ask whether AI can think, feel, or be conscious, they are engaging in metaphysical speculation about the nature of mind and being. Questions about what counts as “real” or “natural” are no longer just theoretical—they affect medical ethics, environmental policies, and legal definitions. In all these areas, attempts to live without metaphysical reflection lead to contradictions or superficiality. As the Nigerian philosopher Asouz argued, reality cannot be fully apprehended without grasping the “ontological horizon” within which all beings

⁸² Kane, R. (2005), *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 71.

⁸³ Kierkegaard, S. (1980), *The Sickness unto Death* (H. V. Hong & E. H. Hong, Trans.), (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p. 33.

find their meaning⁸⁴. Metaphysics, then, is not only a domain of philosophical theory but also a condition for authentic human existence.

CHAPTER FOUR

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

4.1 EVALUATION

The attempt to eliminate metaphysics in philosophical and scientific inquiry has repeatedly proven to be both impractical and self-defeating. Metaphysics, as the study of the fundamental nature of reality, underpins not only abstract philosophical discourse but also the very frameworks of science, ethics, politics, and daily human existence. Despite the rise of empiricism and logical positivism in the 20th century, which sought to discard metaphysical speculation as meaningless, the persistence of metaphysical assumptions in all areas of thought demonstrates its inescapability. The Logical Positivists, particularly members of the Vienna Circle, held that only empirically verifiable statements were meaningful, thereby excluding metaphysical claims⁸⁵. Their criterion of meaning, the verification principle, was itself a metaphysical claim, as it could not be empirically verified. This paradox undermines the core tenet of their anti-metaphysical stance, revealing that even attempts to eliminate metaphysics depend on metaphysical

⁸⁴ Asouzu, I. I. (2007), *Ibuanyidanda: New Complementary Ontology*, (Berlin: Lit Verlag), p. 23.

⁸⁵ Ayer, A. J. (1936), *Language, Truth and Logic*, (London: Gollancz), p. 77.

assumptions. As Quine argued in *Word and Object*, “the analytic-synthetic distinction, which underlies much of logical positivism, is itself problematic”⁸⁶. Quine shows that our knowledge is a web of beliefs, where empirical and metaphysical claims are intertwined.

In scientific methodology, Karl Popper affirmed that metaphysical assumptions are vital for scientific progress. He noted that “hypotheses are not derived from pure observation but are conjectures shaped by underlying theoretical frameworks—many of which are metaphysical in nature”⁸⁷. Thomas Kuhn demonstrated that scientific revolutions are not purely rational processes but are governed by paradigm shifts, which are deeply metaphysical in their implications about what counts as evidence, truth, or explanation.⁸⁸

In ethics and political philosophy, metaphysics is equally indispensable. Theories of justice, personhood, rights, and duties presuppose metaphysical views about human nature and moral reality. John Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice* relies on metaphysical assumptions about the person as a rational agent behind the “veil of ignorance,”⁸⁹ while Alasdair MacIntyre, in *After Virtue*, critiques modern moral philosophy precisely for its failure to recognize its dependence on metaphysical traditions, such as Aristotelian

⁸⁶ Quine, W. V. O. (1960), *Word and Object*, (Cambridge: MIT Press), p. 89.

⁸⁷ Popper, K. (1959), *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, (London: Hutchinson Books, 1959), p. 54.

⁸⁸ Kuhn, T. S. (1962), *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), p. 90.

⁸⁹ Rawls, J. (1971), *A Theory of Justice*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), p. 89.

teleology⁹⁰. Language and meaning are also inherently metaphysical. Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* critiques the notion of a private language and reveals how meaning is grounded in communal practices. Yet, even these practices are embedded in ontological assumptions about how words refer to the world⁹¹. Jacques Derrida, through deconstruction, highlights how language always carries traces of metaphysical presuppositions, especially the privileging of presence and identity.⁹²

The existential dimension of metaphysics cannot be overstated. Martin Heidegger in *Being and Time* explores how being is not an abstract notion but an existential condition of Dasein—human being⁹³. To live as a human being is already to engage in metaphysical reflection, whether about mortality, freedom, or the meaning of life. Viktor Frankl supports this view by arguing that human beings are meaning-seeking creatures, and this quest for meaning is ultimately metaphysical⁹⁴. The attempt to sidestep metaphysics often leads to a reductionist or superficial understanding of reality. Without metaphysical reflection, ethical theories may become relativistic, scientific theories uncritical, and

⁹⁰ MacIntyre, A. (1981), *After Virtue*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), p. 145.

⁹¹ Wittgenstein, L. (1953), *Philosophical Investigations* (G. E. M. Anscombe, Trans.). (Oxford: Blackwell), p. 100.

⁹² Derrida, J. (1976), *Of Grammatology* (G. C. Spivak, Trans.). (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), p. 56.

⁹³ Heidegger, M. (1962), *Being and Time* (J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Trans.), (New York: Harper & Row), p. 102.

⁹⁴ Frankl, V. E. (1984), *Man's Search for Meaning*, (New York: Washington Square Press), p. 50.

human existence hollow. Thus, engaging with metaphysics is not a luxury but a necessity for rigorous intellectual inquiry and authentic human living. In evaluating the various perspectives, it becomes clear that metaphysics is not merely an optional branch of philosophy but the foundational bedrock of all thought. As Stephen Mumford asserts, even denying metaphysics is a metaphysical position⁹⁵. Therefore, the futility of avoiding metaphysics lies in the fact that to think, question, or inquire at all is already to be involved in metaphysical activity.

Attempts to avoid metaphysics often stem from a desire for clarity, precision, and empirical certainty, particularly within the scientific and analytic traditions. However, this ambition frequently overlooks the foundational role metaphysics plays in enabling such inquiry in the first place. As the German philosopher Martin Heidegger emphasized, metaphysics is not a peripheral concern but the core of philosophical thought—it is “the ground of the ground”. He argued that even the question of being itself is inherently metaphysical, and any effort to sidestep it amounts to philosophical shallowness. This perspective calls into question the feasibility of purely scientific or logical reasoning that attempts to expel metaphysical inquiry.

Metaphysical thinking is not merely abstract or speculative—it informs the very structure of how we perceive and categorize reality. For instance, basic distinctions such as cause

⁹⁵ Mumford, S. (2012), *Metaphysics: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 34.

and effect, substance and attribute, identity and change are deeply metaphysical. These concepts are indispensable to science, logic, and reasoning, and yet they cannot be empirically verified in themselves. As Kant argued in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, metaphysics is a condition for the possibility of experience; that is, it structures our understanding before experience even begins. Hence, discarding metaphysics is not only impractical but would make coherent thought and empirical analysis impossible.

In the context of modern science, even fields like physics, which rely on empirical data and mathematical modeling, are built upon unprovable metaphysical assumptions. For example, the idea that nature is uniform or that the laws of physics are consistent across time and space are not empirically proven—they are metaphysical postulates taken on faith for the sake of coherent theorizing⁹⁶. Thus, science itself is not metaphysically neutral, but deeply embedded in philosophical commitments. In language and meaning, metaphysical commitments appear in our very use of words and grammar. Wittgenstein's later work shows that our understanding of meaning is grounded in shared human practices, which rest on assumptions about intentionality, reference, and the structure of reality. Derrida, in *Of Grammatology*, further deconstructs the claim that language can ever be completely free from metaphysical residues, showing how even the most material or structuralist approaches to text presuppose metaphysical binaries like presence/absence

⁹⁶ Polkinghorne, J. (1994), *Science and Christian Belief*, (London: SPCK), p. 64.

or signifier/signified. Therefore, the claim to avoid metaphysics through linguistic analysis or structuralism falls into contradiction.

Ethical and political systems rest on metaphysical notions of the person, the good, and the nature of society. As Charles Taylor argues in *Sources of the Self*, even modern secular ethics draws upon older metaphysical traditions, whether implicitly or explicitly.⁹⁷ The Enlightenment attempt to base ethics solely on reason without metaphysical grounding has been critiqued by many thinkers, including Alasdair MacIntyre, who demonstrates that when we remove metaphysics from moral language, it becomes incoherent or arbitrary. Thus, morality without metaphysics tends to devolve into emotivism or cultural relativism.

In the existential sphere, metaphysics provides a framework for grappling with the fundamental questions of life—death, purpose, suffering, and freedom. Thinkers such as Søren Kierkegaard and Viktor Frankl argue that meaning and value are rooted in metaphysical reality, not just social construction or psychological preference. Attempts to explain human experience solely in terms of biology, sociology, or psychology often fail to account for the deeper existential longings and metaphysical intuitions that characterize human life. In light of these reflections, the futility of avoiding metaphysics becomes evident. Any attempt to reject metaphysics inevitably results in substituting one

⁹⁷ Taylor, C. (1989), *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), p. 78.

metaphysical framework for another, often without self-awareness. Thus, the more intellectually honest path is not to avoid metaphysics, but to engage it critically and reflectively. Rather than seeing metaphysics as obsolete or meaningless, we should recognize it as a living and necessary dimension of all serious thought.

4.2 SUMMARY

This study has demonstrated that the attempt to avoid metaphysics is, in itself, an impossible and self-defeating task. Metaphysics, as the foundation of all rational inquiry, silently undergirds every discipline, even when thinkers claim to reject it. The first chapter examined the meaning and scope of metaphysics, establishing that it is not merely an abstract speculation but a necessary inquiry into being, reality, and the ultimate grounds of existence. By clarifying the misconceptions that often surround metaphysics, it became evident that no intellectual endeavor can truly escape its influence.

The second chapter examined the meaning of metaphysics and the recurring attempts to reject it across different philosophical traditions. While empiricists, positivists, and postmodern thinkers sought to dismiss metaphysics as speculative or meaningless, their efforts inevitably revealed hidden metaphysical commitments. Empiricism, for instance, in emphasizing sense experience as the sole source of knowledge, rests on the metaphysical claim that reality is confined to what can be perceived. Positivism, in its insistence on verifiable facts, presupposes a metaphysical stance about the nature of truth and reality. Likewise, postmodernism, in rejecting absolutes and critiquing objectivity,

makes an implicit metaphysical claim about the impossibility of universal meaning. These contradictions underscore that even in rejection, metaphysics persists as an unavoidable dimension of thought. Thus, every attempt to overcome it collapses into a paradox, revealing that intellectual discourse cannot stand without a metaphysical foundation.

The third chapter emphasized the futility of rejecting metaphysics by showing its indispensable role in human knowledge and existence. Metaphysics provides the horizon within which science, ethics, and politics derive their meaning and coherence. When dismissed, intellectual discourse risks becoming fragmented, shallow, and directionless, lacking any unifying framework to guide inquiry. By raising fundamental questions about essence, causality, and purpose, metaphysics ensures that thought extends beyond the surface of facts and phenomena to their ultimate significance. Any attempt to reject it amounts to rejecting the very possibility of a comprehensive understanding of reality. Thus, the denial of metaphysics is ultimately futile, for it remains the foundation that silently sustains every act of reasoning and reflection.

The fourth chapter drew attention to the contemporary relevance of metaphysics in addressing pressing human and societal questions. Far from being obsolete, metaphysics provides the tools for evaluating truth, meaning, and values in an age marked by skepticism and relativism. By engaging with metaphysical inquiry, philosophy retains its

vocation of guiding human thought beyond mere utility or technical progress, grounding it instead in the search for ultimate meaning.

4.3 CONCLUSION

This exposé has demonstrated that metaphysics is an indispensable dimension of human inquiry and existence. Across disciplines, science, ethics, language, and daily experience, metaphysical assumptions not only persist but often form the very foundation upon which other knowledge claims rest. Philosophers such as Immanuel Kant argued that metaphysical categories like space, time, and causality are necessary conditions for human experience. Even attempts to exclude metaphysics, such as those seen in logical positivism, rely on metaphysical premises to establish their own principles. The role of metaphysics in science is particularly evident in the work of Karl Popper, who acknowledged that all scientific theories rest upon non-empirical assumptions that cannot themselves be tested empirically. Thomas Kuhn further supported this view by demonstrating that paradigm shifts in science are guided by metaphysical worldviews that shape the interpretation of data and the acceptance of theories. Therefore, science, often regarded as a domain of pure empiricism, is in fact deeply rooted in metaphysical thought.

In the realm of ethics and political philosophy, thinkers such as John Rawls and Alasdair MacIntyre have shown that questions of justice, virtue, and moral obligation depend on

prior metaphysical understandings of personhood, society, and the good life. Attempts to construct moral systems without metaphysical foundations often result in relativism or incoherence. Language and meaning, as examined by Wittgenstein and Derrida, are also embedded within metaphysical frameworks. Our concepts and linguistic structures are shaped by assumptions about reality, identity, and meaning that cannot be reduced to pure logic or empirical data. Quine's rejection of the analytic-synthetic distinction illustrates how empirical knowledge and metaphysical presuppositions are interdependent.

Metaphysical beliefs manifest in the lived experiences of individuals. As Martin Heidegger emphasized, human beings (Dasein) are always already situated in a world shaped by metaphysical structures such as time, death, and meaning. Viktor Frankl asserted that the human search for meaning—an inherently metaphysical endeavor—is essential to psychological well-being. The persistent recurrence of metaphysical thought across all domains of knowledge and life underscores the futility of trying to avoid it. Rather than dismissing metaphysics, philosophers and scholars should confront it directly and critically. Only through such engagement can we clarify our assumptions, deepen our understanding, and navigate the complexities of human existence with philosophical integrity.

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